



BLUEPRINT

City of San Antonio's Development Services Newsletter

2001 budget again targets development services

The City's development services have once again been targeted for investment in the City's recently adopted budget. The City's new fiscal year began October 1.

The budget includes increasing the staffing level in Building Inspections, although three full-time positions are being eliminated as part of a City-wide effort to cut expenditures. One of the eliminations is the permitting function at the Zarzamora service center. This function will now be dispersed among several Community Link Customer Service Centers on the west and south sides of San Antonio.

Building Inspections will be developing two teams of plan reviewers that will cross departmental lines and be headed up by two new Plan Review Manager

positions. These positions will be filled with highly experienced, skilled and accredited engineers or architects, or other skilled individuals with extensive construction codes knowledge. They will have direct responsibility for the routing of plans among the various review components, inside and outside the Building

Inspections Department. Each Manager will be responsible for the day-to-day tracking and managing of plans in the review process as well as the supervision of building, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection, and

traffic/drainage/sidewalk plan review personnel. The Managers will be responsible for communicating with cus-

See Budget/Page 3

Buy the book

Soon-to-be available manual will help guide customers through development process

The City is finalizing its first Development Process Manual that will guide customers through the entire development process.

Developed in conjunction with a subcommittee of the Real Estate Council and drafted by various personnel in the City's development services, the manual is being edited, annotated, and illustrated by Wendell Davis, a consultant with experience in the development process.

The manual is designed to be easily understood by everyone from homeowners to development professionals – including developers, architects, engineers, and contractors. The manual will describe and illustrate the process for obtaining all necessary permits, reviews and inspections for any project -- big or small -- from beginning to end.

The manual is expected to be available to the public sometime in early 2001 at a cost of \$20.



Development services departments will hire additional staff through funds set aside in the latest adopted City budget.



Alert!

The status of plan review, permits and inspections on specific projects can be obtained on the Internet at www.ci.sat.tx.us/bldginsp

Alert!

October
2000

All Aboard

New employees join Building Inspections

The Building Inspections Department is proud to announce the hiring of new personnel. Their names, titles and contact information are as follows:

- Suanne Callow, Fire Protection Specialist – Fire Sprinkler, 207-8160, scallow@ci.sat.tx.us
- Whitney Crahen, Fire Protection Specialist – Fire Alarm, 207-8159, wcrahen@ci.sat.tx.us
- Kevin Carr, Fire Protection Engineering Associate, 207-8248, kcarr@ci.sat.tx.us
- Brian McGraw, Fire Protection Engineer, 207-8248, bmcgraw@ci.sat.tx.us
- Tiffany Garcia, Department Systems Specialist, 207-8241, tgarcia@ci.sat.tx.us
- Richard Caudell, Assistant City Arborist, 207-8197, rcaudell@ci.sat.tx.us

Callow has a B. S. in Fire Protection and Safety Engineering Technology. She has worked for various firms in Arizona and California.

Crahen worked for a firm in Alice, Texas and has NICET certification.

Carr holds a B. A. in Public Administration and an A.A. S. in Fire Science. He has worked in the Bexar County Fire Marshal's office and served in the United States Air Force.

McGraw has a B. S. in Fire Protection Engineering. He has worked for various consulting firms in California, Pennsylvania and Texas, as well as the Fort Worth Fire Department and the U.S. General Services Administration.

Garcia has a B. A. in Criminal Justice and is working on her master's degree. She has worked at West Teleservices and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Caudell has a B. S. in Forestry. He has worked with the City of Houston's Parks and Recreation Department and the Bonehill Foundation of Deep East Texas.

Guide answers important questions regarding fire protection design

Early this year, the Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE) finalized the *SFPE Engineering Guide to Performance-Based Fire Protection Analysis and Design of Buildings*.

Building codes, for the most part, have always been prescriptive in nature. Most

building and fire codes recognize performance-based design as an alternative to the normal prescriptive code requirements, but until recently there have been no guidelines for developing such designs.

This design guide addresses the design process by defining project scope, identifying the design goals, defining

stakeholder and design objectives, developing performance criteria, developing design fire scenarios, developing and evaluating trial designs, and maintaining documentation/specifications.

The design guide can be obtained from SFPE at www.sfpe.org or (301) 718-2910.

Public input needed on UDC

The Planning Department has prepared a tentative schedule for soliciting public input on a draft of the Unified Development Code (UDC).

Stakeholder meetings will be held each Tuesday from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the Municipal Plaza Building "B" Room, 114 W. Commerce. Photo-copies and digital copies of the draft may be obtained by calling or visiting the Planning Department on the third floor of the Municipal Plaza Building. Photo-copies and CDs are limited and will be provided on a first-come basis. Only one copy of either version will be provided to an individual, firm, neighborhood association or other entity reviewing the document. The draft UDC also can be reviewed at any City library or on the Planning Department's website, www.ci.sat.tx.us/planning/udc.

The Planning and Zoning Commissions will review the document in February 2001 with City Council action planned for March. For more information, call (210) 207-7873.

Nominations sought for landscape awards program



Landscape architects and weekend warriors are encouraged to enter or nominate others for outstanding achievements in tree preservation and landscape design as part of the Second Annual San Antonio Landscape and Tree Awards Program 2000.

The goal of the awards program is to identify and recognize outstanding examples of recent landscaping projects in order to show their contributions to the quality of life for citizens of San Antonio.

Submissions are being solicited for the following categories: superior landscape; excellence in landscape design; community landscape; landscape restoration; and tree preservation.

All entries must be received by the Building Inspections Department by noon, November 3. Call (210) 207-8197 for more information.

City embarks on future with Geographic Information System

San Antonio has taken a giant leap into the 21st Century with the appointment of Joe Chapa as the City's first Director of Geographic Information Systems.

Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, is the geographic display of both natural and man-made features of an area as well as data (attributes) associated with these features. Maps created by a GIS show locations, such as City facilities or subdivision homes, and information about these locations such as types of services each facility provides and property valuation.

What does this mean for the City of San Antonio? It will increase the efficiency of City staff in working with geographical information and data by improving geographic data sharing between departments. Different City departments can query databases, organize and exhibit the data geographically, and manipulate and analyze data.

A new system is currently in development that will be accessible to the citizens of San Antonio. Using a GIS-based data

server, a citizen can query thousands of public property records to obtain information that once took hours and a trip downtown. A simple graphical user interface and query function will allow any citizen to find and print information at the touch of a button. The server is generic, linking GIS data of any type to existing tabular data in any database format and displaying results over the Internet.

The GIS not only increases staff efficiency, but eliminates duplication between departments. GIS also makes it possible to share information with the public and to make accessing it as user-friendly as possible. In an effort to further

educate the public about GIS, the City will host a GIS Day at the Central Library on November 15. Visitors will be able to see how the City uses GIS and actually get a chance to experience it hands on.

For more information about GIS or the GIS Day, please contact Debbie Allen at (210) 207-6534.



Design alert: Utility encroachments

The Building Inspections Department continues to receive building permit applications and plans with roof overhangs encroaching existing utility easements. This practice is unsafe and not permitted. However, a permit may be issued if an applicant submits letters from utility companies authorizing the encroachment. These authorization letters should be submitted along with the building permit application and plans, whenever feasible. Failure to have an authorization letter could mean the difference between obtaining a permit in seven days versus having your application or plans placed on hold.

Check out the CaDRE Forum

The City is initiating ongoing seminars for development professionals to educate and inform them on various topics related to development services and codes.

Tentatively entitled "CaDRE" Forum (Construction and Development Resources Education), the seminars will be geared toward trade and professional fields. The first of these seminars will focus on fire sprinkler plan review and fire inspections.

If you wish to attend the first forum or have an idea for a topic or group to address, call (210) 207-8237.

Budget from Page 1

tomers about their plans, and ensuring that plans are routed through the review process in the most expeditious and efficient manner possible.

The Building Inspections Department also is gaining an additional plumbing inspector to help with the increasing demand for general inspections as well as inspections related to the new reuse water system being implemented by the San Antonio Water System (SAWS). With this additional inspector, the Plumbing Section of Building Inspections will include 11 field inspectors.

Building Inspections also received funding to improve the automated telephone response system to allow callers to request inspections 24 hours a day. Once this information is

inputted, the request is automatically routed to the appropriate inspector, depending on the type of inspection to be performed and the area of the city the inspection is located.

The City will be adding one additional engineer position to help reduce the amount of time it takes for plans to be reviewed by Public Works. Specifically, this new position will be reviewing traffic and sidewalk regulations on construction and site plans.

The Planning Department received \$60,000 to implement the revised Unified Development Code (UDC). These funds will provide a training workshop for City staff and for the public, conducted by the consultant who helped prepare the draft. In addition, the consultant will be retained for a year to assist in interpretation of the UDC as well as fine-tuning and preparing any amendments that might be required once the document becomes effective.

Do you have development services questions? Please call 207-7776 for more information.

One-Stop Counter sets course for One-Stop Center

Development services staff getting head start on future

The new Development Services Division of the Building Inspections Department is organized around the concept of a One-Stop Development Services Center. The new center is not scheduled to open until March 2002. For now, staff at the One-Stop Counter on the ninth floor of the Municipal Plaza Building downtown are working to emulate and put in practice the services that will ultimately be provided at the new center.

The One-Stop Counter opened in October 1999 and began offering information such as zoning, addressing, platting, drainage, traffic and permitting. By June 2000, services included minor plan review and permit issuance as well. The Counter includes staff from the Build-



The One-Stop Counter expedites tasks for the City's development services customers.

ing Inspections, Public Works and Planning Departments. The three departments, working within space limitations, will attempt to have most of their development services in place at the Counter by the time the new Center is open.

The development services team at the Counter will be able to review and approve plans, allowing the customer to pay for and leave the building with per-

mit in hand. Those plans that may require more detailed plan review will be accepted at the Counter after careful review of the information submitted. This initial review will improve the quality of the building permit application thus encouraging a more prompt review by plan reviewers.

"The day of filing development-related applications at one location for building, zoning, platting, barricades, driveway cuts, sprinklers or alarms and having City review and approve minor plans in a single day is closer than ever," says Florencio Peña, assistant director of Building Inspections. "Most importantly, the concept of a one stop development services center has set in motion more than a confirmation of good customer service, it is reengineering the way development services are being provided."

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